

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 HA-05 AID-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 EB-08 /091 W
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P R 011629Z DEC 77

FM AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3887
INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARAMARIBO 1293

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDEV PINT EAID NS US
SUBJ: ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN'S VISIT TO SURINAM

SUMMARY: ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN RECEIVED WARM RECEPTION DURING 40-HOUR VISIT TO SURINAM NOVEMBER 29-DECEMBER 1. IN MEETINGS WITH PRESIDENT FERRIER AND PRIME MINISTER ARRON, STRESS WAS ON SURINAM'S DESIRE FOR INCREASED COOPERATION WITH U.S. AND COMMITMENT TO SAME IDEALS OF DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICED AND PROMOTED BY U.S. AMBASSADOR TODMAN ALSO MET WITH OPPOSITION LEADER JAGGERNATH LACHMON AND WITH A GROUP OF YOUNG SURINAM PROFESSIONALS, DISCUSSING WITH THE LATTER SURINAM'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE CARIBBEAN; VISITED SURINAME ALUMINUM COMPANY'S (SURALCO) ALUMINA REFINERY AND ALUMINUM SMELTER AT PARANAM; AND WAS INTERVIEWED FOR NATIONAL TELEVISION AND RADIO. END SUMMARY.

1. IN THEIR MEETINGS WITH AMBASSADOR TODMAN NOVEMBER 30, BOTH PRESIDENT FERRIER AND PRIME MINISTER ARRON HIGHLIGHTED SURINAM'S DEVELOPING CONCIOUSNESS OF ITSELF AS A WESTERN
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HEMISPHERE COUNTRY, STRESSING THE TIES WHICH HAVE ALREADY BEEN FORMED--AND WHICH WILL BE FURTHER STRENGTHENED-- BETWEEN SURINAM AND BRAZIL ON THE ONE HAND AND SURINAM AND VENEZUELA ON THE OTHER. BOTH WERE LESS CLEAR ON SURINAM'S ROLE IN THE CARIBBEAN, RECOGNIZING HOWEVER THAT THERE ARE CERTAIN HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL TIES CONNECTING SURINAM WITH THE AREA. ADDITIONAL DETAIL ON THEIR VIEWS ON THE CARIBBEAN

IN CONTEXT OF U.S. CARIBBEAN COOPERATION INITIATIVE BEING
REPORTED SEPTTEL.

2. AMBASSADOR TODMAN PRAISED SURINAM AS A MODEL OF A
DEMOCRATIC COUNTRY SINCERELY COMMITTED TO THE PROTECTION
AND PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN HIS MEETINGS WITH BOTH
THE PRESIDENT AND ARRON. BOTH REITERATED THE FUNDAMENTAL
IMPORTANCE OF DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS TO SURINAM, WITH
ARRON DECLARING THERE WOULD NEVER BE ANY MISUNDERSTANDING
ON THIS POINT.

3. THE PRESIDENT ALSO DESCRIBED SURINAM'S TRANSITION FROM
A EUROPEAN "ISLAND" ON THE SOUTH AMERICAN CONTINENT AND
NOTED SURINAM'S NEED TO LEARN MORE ABOUT ITS HEMISPHERE
AS IT SEEKS TO DEFINE ITS ROLE IN THE AREA. IN KEEPING
WITH THIS NEED, HE SUGGESTED THAT U.S. MIGHT ADVISE
SURINAM ON EXPANDING AND TRAINING ITS PROFESSIONAL FOREIGN
SERVICE, TO BE OF MORE USE IN INFORMING THE WORLD ABOUT
SURINAM. HE EXPECTED THAT THE SURINAM GOVERNMENT (GOS)
WOULD FORMALLY REQUEST SUCH ASSISTANCE SOON. AMBASSADOR
TODMAN AGREED THIS WOULD BE USEFUL AND INDICATED WE WOULD
BE RESPONSIVE.

4. ARRON CONCENTRATED ON THE THEME THAT SURINAM AND U.S.
ARE FRIENDS AND THAT THE U.S. SHOULD NOT IGNORE OR FORGET
ITS FRIENDS JUST BECAUSE THEY PRESENTED NO IMMEDIATE
PROBLEMS. CITING REPORTS THAT TODMAN HAD AGREED TO GREATLY
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INCREASED ECONOMIC AID TO GUYANA (WHICH TODMAN CHARACTERIZED
AS EXAGGERATED) ARRON ARGUED FOR A GREATER U.S. ROLE IN
SURINAM'S SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND FOR AID IN
ADDITION TO WHAT IS BEING RECEIVED FROM THE NETHERLANDS.
HE LATER AGREED WITH AMBASSADOR TODMAN, HOWEVER, THAT
SURINAM'S NEEDS ARE MORE IN THE AREA OF TECHNICAL
ASSISTANCE AND TRANSFER OF KNOW-HOW THAN OF MONEY.

5. IN RESPONSE TO ARRON, AMBASSADOR TODMAN EMPHASIZED OUR
DESIRE TO MAINTAIN AND STRENGTHEN OUR TIES WITH SURINAM
AND SAID WE WOULD BE PREPARED TO CONSIDER AREAS OF POSSIBLE
COOPERATION WITH SURINAM IF THE GOS IDENTIFIES FIELDS IN
WHICH IT FEELS U.S. HAS SOME SPECIAL CONTRIBUTION TO OFFER.
AT THE SAME TIME, HE EXPLAINED THAT WE DO NOT LOOK FOR
ASSISTANCE AS A WAY OF MAKING OF KEEPING FRIENDS PER SE BUT
AS A MEANS OF HELPING THOSE MOST IN NEED WHEREVER THEY MAY
BE, SIMULTANEOUSLY NOTING THAT OTHERWISE THE RESENTMENT
STEMMING FROM A FEELING OF DEPENDENCY ON EXTERNAL ECONOMIC
ASSISTANCE CAN OFTEN HARM THE RELATIONS BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES.

6. IN A PRIVATE MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR TODMAN, OPPOSITION
LEADER LACHMON ALLEGED THERE HAD BEEN FRAUD IN THE OCT 31

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS BUT DECLARED THEM OVER AND DONE WITH, WITH QUESTION OF FORMING A NEW GOVERNMENT NOW AT THE TOPE OF THE AGENDA. HE NOTED THE POSSIBILITY THAT ARRON WOULD NOT SUCEED IN FORMING A GOVERNMENT BECAUSE OF FORMER AGRICULTURE MINISTER SOEMITA'S INSISTENCE ON FOUR CABINET POSTS FOR HIS JAVANESE-BASED KTPI PARTY, BUT HE DID NOT INDICATE HE REALLY EXPECTED AN OUTCOME WHICH WOULD LEAD THE PRESIDENT TO TURN TO HIM WITH A MANDATE TO FORM A GOVERNMENT. (LATER IN THE DAY IT WAS ANNOUNCED, AND ARRON CONFIRMED AT DINNER, THAT HE HAD IN FACT REACHED AGREEMENT WITH HIS COALITION PARTNERS ON THE DIVISION OF SEATS IN THE CABINET.)

7. LACHMON FORESAW NO REAL PROGRESS FOR SURINAM UNTIL
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THE FORMER HINDUSTANI-CREOLE GOVERNING COALITION IS RESTORED, GIVING CONFIDENCE AGAIN TO THE PRODUCTIVE HINDUSTANI SEGMENT OF THE POPULATION. LACHMON ARGUED FOR MORE DEVELOPMENT EMPHASIS ON ARGICULTURE AND IN THE URBAN AREAS WHILE COMMENTING THAT SURINAM DOES NOT NEED ADDITIONAL AID FUNDS AT THIS TIME. HE SAW A CERTAIN CULTURAL AND ETHNIC AFFINITY BETWEEN SURINAM AND THE CARIBBEAN WHICH CALLED FOR FRIENDLY RELATIONS BUT DID NOT PROMISE MUCH ECONOMIC GIVE AND TAKE, SEEING SURINAM'S ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES RATHER IN TRADE WITH EEC AND THE U.S. HE ALSO THOUGHT SURINAM SHOULD EXERCISE CAUTION IN DEALING WITH ITS LARGEST NEIGHBOR, BRAZIL.

8. COMMENT: GOALS OF AMBASSADOR TODMAN'S VISIT WERE TO DEMONSTRATE U.S. INTEREST IN SURINAM'S DEVELOPMENT AND TO TAKE PUBLIC NOTE OF SURINAM'S SHARING OF U.S. PROMOTION OF DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS AS WELL AS TO INCREASE USG UNDERSTANDING OF SURINAM'S VIEW OF ITSELF AND ITS REGION. THESE GOALS WERE FULLY ACHIEVED. AMBASSADOR TODMAN LEAVES BEHIND IN SURINAM BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF U.S. POLICY IN THE AREA AS WELL AND A STRENGTHENED FEELING THAT THE U.S. IS NOT TOO BIG AND SURINAM NOT TOO SMALL TO ATTRACT OUR CONCERN AND INTEREST. ZURHELLEN

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
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Drafter: n/a
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Errors: N/A
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Subject: ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN'S VISIT TO SURINAM SUMMARY: ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN RECEIVED WARM RECEPTION DURING 40-HOUR VISIT TO SURINAM NOVEMBER 2 9-DECEMB
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